

ELEGIAC EPISTLES

ON THE

CALAMITIES

OF

LOVE AND WAR

Including a genuine Description of the Tragical Engagement between his Majesty's Ships the Serapis and Countess of Scarborough, and the Enemy's Squadron under the Command of PAUL JONES, on the Twenty-third of September, 1779.

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EPISTLE THIRD

To ELOISA

FROM scenes where Fancy droops her languid wing,
And private woes from public discords spring;
Where hostile centinels, with assuming power
And pointed weapons, guard each passage-door,
In what sad numbers shall the Muse relate
The unceasing rage of unpropitious fate;
Or how address, amidst the direful strife,
My ELOISA, and my dearest wife!

The *Gallic* lovers, to misfortune doom'd,
Whose names we have from similar woes assum'd,
That *tranquil* life were destin'd to retain
For which the writer long has sigh'd in vain.
Remote from tumult, 'midst the sacred vale
Each, unmolested, breath'd their plaintive tale.
Her balmy pinions Peace around them spread,
Nor war nor ocean fill'd their minds with dread.
Soft scenes of solitude and careless ease
Their griefs might *soften*, though they could not please;
While o'er the hallowed domes the organ's strains
With these conspir'd to mitigate their pains.
No worldly cares their calm retreats annoy'd,
Nor family-wants solicitude supply'd:
Each knew the other from those ills secur'd
So oft from painful indigence endur'd;
Nor for a numerous offspring, dearly lov'd,
Their vacant breasts parental anguish prov'd.
Yet deeply wretched was their direful state;
Consign'd the victims of a hapless fate!
What eye can read the story of their woe,

And not with pity's grateful current flow?
 The tragic volume ne'er before me lies
 But o'er my breast the pangs of pity rise:
 While oft I wish the sacred cells to view
 Where each retiring, bade the world adieu;
 Elaps'd the course of numerous years, to death
 With mind serene resign'd their parting breath.
 Return, my muse, where recent ills await
 To increase the annals of disastrous fate.

From War's malignant reign what evils flow!
 (Parent of ruin and tremendous woe!)
 How many fathers grieve for children slain!
 How many sons lament their sires in vain!
 How many widows fruitlessly deplore
 The husbands fated to behold no more!—
 Commerce and Arts the hostile æra mourn,
 And towns and cities undistinguish'd burn:
 Hence antient lore from Eastern empires fled,
 And dreadful ruin o'er each region spread;
 Regions no more with envied bulwarks crown'd,
 Nor o'er the world triumphantly renow'nd.

Yet when our COMMERCE o'er the wasting main
 Insulting Powers endeavour to restrain,
 The sons of war, inur'd the scene to brave,
 Must pour their thunder o'er the briny wave:
 Whene'er to arms our COUNTRY'S safety calls,
 And Enemies threaten to invade our walls,
 Each Individual must then unite
 To oppose the danger, and sustain the fight.
 Then no domestic feuds, or civil jar
 Should interrupt the necessary war;
 But interested in one general cause,

(To guard our Properties, Religion, Laws)
Each party then should amicably join,
And all their efforts chearfully combine.
Success from *harmony* will ever flow,
And conquest humble each aspiring foe;
But where divisions and dissensions reign,
Assembling Armies are supply'd in vain.

But leave, my muse, to other pens the charge
To sing the fortune of the war at large;
While I proceed, in numbers more confin'd,
To paint the Action for my task assign'd.

Three weeks, assail'd by inauspicious gales,
That rent their bulwarks and reduc'd their sails,
Our ships contended with the raging seas,
When Heaven assign'd a favorable breeze;
And as across the deep, at noon of day,
The optic tube enlarg'd the visual ray,
Where native skies shone tranquil and serene,
Not distant far the British cliffs were seen.
Around the languid and exhausted crew
The grateful tidings animating flew:
With fancy'd joys Imagination teems,
And o'er each face returning pleasure beams.

Though soft humanity but seldom deigns
To shed her influence on the liquid plains,
(The ungenial element whose sons are found
Ruff as the torrent that revolves around)
Some few there are who feel the grateful glow
That from affection and from duty flow.
To prove his love for an affectionate wife,
And to preserve an aged mother's life,

A pound of tea one's jacket-lining held,
 And one's a pound of coffee-beans conceal'd.
 Ye watchful crew whom power abus'd decrees
 The practis'd smuggler's ponderous loads to seize,
 Forbear to arrest the little hoards of those
 From whose laborious toils our commerce flows;
 Nor meanly rob them of that little joy
 Their trivial gifts are destin'd to supply.

Oft as we traverse the tempestuous vale
 Of human life (records the moral tale)
 Some unexpected storm is found to arise
 Where close in view the wish'd-for haven lies.
 While each attentive ey'd the gladdening shore,
 And Fancy deem'd each threatening danger o'er
 The exultive mariners hope where Humber flows,
 With night's return to share the wish'd repose:
 More pleasing thoughts, that sleep's access deny'd,
 The writer's breast impatiently supply'd:
 Eager to grasp the lines inscrib'd by you,
 The hastening *morn* a happier picture drew;
 Fill'd every vein with a tumultous joy,
 And in my breast renew'd the grateful sigh,
 Till information led us to pursue
 The hostile fleet that soon appear'd in view;
 PAUL JONES the ruler of the motley crew.

Heavens! that a man, forgetting nature's laws,
 Should take up arms against his country's cause!
 Join with the common enemy, and dare
 To his native walls to bear the guilty war!—
 The crime is such when, lost to filial love,
 The barbarous son his mother's death would prove;
 Devote, to gratify delusive charms,
 Her life who kindly nurs'd him in her arms.

Long had the bold invaders o'er the main
 Annoy'd our traffic, and our vessels ta'en;
 Impower'd to sink, to burn, and to destroy,
 The smallest bark still strove in vain to fly.
 Some recent capture, as each day return'd,
 The sorrowing wife or grieving matron mourn'd;
 Whose husband's—son's—assiduous care supply'd
 The needful sustenance no more enjoy'd.
 For us was doom'd the dangerous essay
 The progress of their bold career to stay.

The rebel chief assembles all his crew,
 And with these words their fix'd attention drew:
 "Ye gallant lads—asserters of the cause
 So crown'd with honor and deserv'd applause;
 Whose fortunes are already nearly made
 By the numerous captures to our ports convey'd;
 (Nor have you seen me spare my native shore
 Where Caledonia hears her billows roar;
 Where, rous'd to arms at Freedom's glorious call,
 Forsaking father—mother—kindred all,
 I went in quest of fortune to the plains
 Where on our side the war triumphant reigns);
 Say, are you willing to engage the Foe
 Whose course now bears to meet the fatal blow?
 For if their force be all we now descry,
 Not long their efforts can the fight supply:
 Nor though their strength increase, 'tis now too late
 For us to 'scape the destiny of Fate.
 Consider, too, what treatment we must meet
 (Deem'd REBELS!) should we yield to a defeat.
 Better to fall in war's vindictive strife,
 Than 'midst inglorious chains to part with life.
 For you whose wounds (if wounds prevail) demand

The care of those that rule the Western Land,
 Expect those liberal pensions to enjoy
 Their rich resources can so well supply.”
 The hapless crew consentingly unite
 To aid their leader in the approaching fight.

Suppress'd the rage of *Elemental* war,
 BELLONA now assumes her flaming car:
 At her approach tranquility retires,
 And, rouz'd to arms, each softer thought expires.
All hands to quarters!—now was heard around;
All hands to quarters!—from the decks rebound:
 The ready crew the summons throng to obey,
 While Fate to slaughter dooms the tragic day!
 To arrange the cannon, and adjust them so
 As might be likeliest to annoy the foe,
 Each in his hand a massy crow sustains,
 And o'er the scene a dread confusion reigns!

Meanwhile the commerce to our charge consign'd,
 Pass'd unmolested for the ports design'd:
 Secure from the pursuit of those who, though
 They should not strike, shall mourn the impending blow;
 And while oblig'd to form the quick retreat,
 Shall deem a victory almost a defeat.

Amaz'd, the Enemy (dubious of our force)
 Beheld our dauntless persevering course:
 Again survey'd us with perspective eye;
 Again astonish'd that we came so nigh:
 Still thought some aiding vessel in the rear
 Would, ere we met, within their sight appear;
 Till they conceiv'd (a nearer view attain'd)
 The conquest easy which they dearly gain'd.

Now o'er the trembling wave the queen of night
 Refulgent beam'd with a reflected light:
 Hush'd the loud murmurs of the deep profound,
 An awful stillness seem'd to reign around;
 Till form'd the line where from each quarter flew
 The sonorous charge each hasten'd to renew;
 While death-devouring flames impetuous rise,
 And clouds of sulphur darken all the skies!
 High on its staff in conflagration shines
 The pendent flag that varied stripes combines,
 Where 'midst his crew the rebel warrior stands,
 And furious issues round his dire commands;
 With flattering promises here courage warms,
 And there inflicts the fatal laws of arms.
 In close attack the desperate fight proceeds;
 No piteous pang the raging war impedes:
 The thundering strife awakes the shores around,
 And seas and skies with dreadful voice resound!

Now scenes of woe the tender breast assail,
 And furnish matter for the tragic tale;
 The cries of wounded mingling with the noise
 The warring tumult every where supplies;
 While, doom'd the seas with streaming blood to stain,
 The decks are crowded with the breathless slain;
 Where thrice the number on our side that fell,
 Of the desperate enemy bade the world farewell.
 Such the sad scene where'er her guilty hand
 Rebellion raises 'gainst her native land;
 The fortune such of those who rashly dare
 To join the leaders of unlawful war:
 Better the ills of adverse fate to meet
 With innocence, than guiltfully retreat.*

*Alluding to the excuse made by some of Jones's officers for their being under his command,

Should now the Congress whose usurpéd sway
 Deluded subjects blindly obey,
 The most elated and enriching line
 The hapless writer of these lays assign,
 Against his king or country to unite,
 Secur'd from all the dangers of the fight,
 The proffer'd gifts I would with scorn refuse,
 Nor *on such terms* dismiss the mourning Muse.

Would grief permit her to extend her flight
 Beyond the Atlantic, and at large recite
 The dire effects from civil strife that flow,
 And each sad monument of wilful woe,
 Where jarring interests Reason's optics blind,
 And baneful prejudice perverts the mind,
 In strains more tragic would extend the page
 That henceforth may some abler bard engage:
 Enough for me to trace the destin'd tale
 Where present ills more forcibly prevail.

While ardent yet the warriors engage,
 And urge the battle with tumultuous rage,
 Should but one spark the magazine pervade
 Where the combustibles of death are laid,
 One general fate would to eternal sleep
 Consign the hapless tenants of the deep!
 Such was the tragic scene that late befel,
 On Gallia's coast, the ship that fought so well;
 The scene that swept at once from mortal view
 The gallant FARMER and his valiant crew.*

Blest be the Prince whose liberal supplies
 Hasten'd to sooth the pregnant widow's sighs!
 Susceptible, from virtues seldom known

*Captain Moses Farmer of the *Quebec* frigate.

To grace the monarch and adorn the throne,
 What sad solicitude the bosom rends
 Where adverse fate connubial love attends,
 As far as affluence could give redress,
 Who joy'd to mitigate deplor'd distress.
 When acts like these distinguish sovereign sway,
 Who would refuse each mandate to obey;
 Or fear the tendency of laws that bear
 The approbation of such royal care?
 Nor though, to please the discontented train
 That from delusion or design complain,
 Our Gracious Sire should, as each murmur flows,
 Dismiss the Counsellors his wisdom chose,
 Would this be found to terminate the blame
 That with each day a recent change would claim?
 While interrupted, erringly, and slow,
 The important business of the State would flow.

Nor be, my muse, the grateful task deny'd
 To sing the Princess to his arms ally'd:
 Emblem of virtue and each grace serene!
 Whose mild demeanor dignifies the Queen!
 With every merit forméd to engage
 The world to copy her instructive page;
 To sooth the painful cares of regal sway,
 And gild the throne with a celestial ray!—

EPISTLE THIRD

In Continuation

A GAIN, my muse, the sad review sustain
 Where war triumphant rides upon the main:
 The gallant Chiefs by desperate foes annoy'd,
 Undaunted, yet the arduous fight supply'd:
 Still o'er their heads Britannia's ensigns wave,
 And still their enemies they dare to brave;
 Who, while with each report their ships are rent,
 Amaz'd and trembling dread the dire event!
 Long will the annals of historic fame
 Resound with PEARSON'S and with PIERCY'S name;
 Who jointly with such fortitude engag'd
 Where triple force the unequal combat wag'd.

For *quarter*, now, the Enemy's heard to cry,
 While arm'd with swords and pikes conceal'd they lie:
Do you strike? our gallant Commodore demands;
 No answer's made, and silent are all hands.
 Swift o'er the battlements, their decks to gain,
 Our sailors mount, and tread amidst the slain,
 When on them rush the unexpected foe,
 But by retreating, 'scap'd the destined blow.
 —'Twas thus the rebel chief successful try'd
 To gain what yet the force of arms deny'd.

Again the bursts of cannon rend the sky!
 Dreadful again the distant shores reply!
 While raging flames amid the gloom of night
 Emit an awful and tremendous light!

Obscur'd the lustre of the lunar ray,
 Nor lightsome stars the Ethereal orbs display:
 The aspect such as when in thundering showers
 Her warring elements Vesuvius pours.

While safe on shore the world lay wrapt in sleep,
 Four hours the combat echoed o'er the deep.
 But vain with *numbers* courage would oppose;
 In vain the Action still forbear to close:
 To superior force compell'd at length to yield,
 Again we're doom'd to plow the liquid field;
 Where tottering masts beneath their pressure bend
 And rising winds the weakened canvas rend:
 Unknown what clime shall yield the imprisoning shore,
 Or if we e'er shall view Britannia more.

Had then some messenger, with kindly aid
 The wish'd-for Letter to my hands convey'd,
 The acquisition with celestial power
 Had sooth'd the miseries of the present hour.
 Not then so sadly had I fix'd my eye
 Where the lessening land renew'd each painful sigh;
 Not then, while traversing the watery way,
 So mourn'd the adverse fortune of the day.

To whom, to mitigate the latent smart,
 Shall private anguish each distress impart?
 On ocean's dreary mansions dwell not those
 By nature form'd to soften human woes;
 Thy angelic sex!—whom bounteous heaven design'd
 To polish and to *humanize* mankind.
 With just emotion did the Tragic bard*
 Whose memory claims each female's soft regard,

*Otway

Exclaim that MAN, had WOMAN fail'd to charm,
 From brutes had differ'd but in human form.
 By you sublim'd, we feel the tender woe
 That makes the sigh to heave—the tear to flow,
 When others' grief that sympathy incites
 Which every virtue in its power unites.
 But where no female intercourse is known,
 (That intercourse the mind supplies alone)
 Rude as the tenants of the forest drear,
 The sons of human-kind will e'er appear;
 Save those whom nature, singularly kind,
 With *native* softness fabricates the mind.
 From YOU, Society (Life's cordial scene!)
 Assumes that soothing and celestial mien
 Which can each tumult of the mind serene.
 Engender'd midst the harsh discordant noise
 The Tuscan grape or Indian cane supplies,
 How gross the attachments Men which each maintain
 To those between your tender sex that reign!
 'Tis *yours* each varied scene of bliss to know
 From ties of virtuous intercourse that flow;
 Where friendship's balmy power, that never cloy,
 Contracts your sorrows, and augments your joys.

No more the Muse where Humber's billows flow
 Shall tune the lyre to elegies of woe;
 No more soft pity sooth her plaintive strain
 Where H(A)MM(ON)D and where W(I)LB(E)RF(OR)CE remain;
 Whose generous breasts have felt the virtuous sigh
 Which sense and sensibility supply:
 By nature form'd to bless the marriage-ties,
 And crown each day with unremitting joys.

Beware, fair Nymphs, with whom your lots you bind;
 Your sex in *husbands* seldom *lovers* find.

Too soon with most the nuptial season's o'er,
 And sated passion warms the heart no more:
 Or gain'd the dowry that selection made,
 Too oft the female finds herself betray'd
 Who, since no remedy can now be found,
 Submits to bear the matrimonial wound;
 And if she shares the pageantry of life,
 Is by the world esteem'd the happy wife.
 Nor can the genial bliss you wish prevail
 Where grateful sense and pliant temper fail;
 Or where devoid of tender feelings, glows
 No soothing pity for inflicted woes.
 Such must be found to prove the callous train
 Who laugh at love, and satyrize the pain
 Which generous minds are fated to sustain:
 Who scorn to view the sad historic page
 Where virtuous passion mourns misfortune's rage;
 Or view *unmov'd* the lamentable tale
 Where mutual loves their mutual griefs bewail;
 Nor think the plaints of absence well supply'd
 Where numerous years the nuptial knot have tied.*

In vain would Fancy fly the painful view
 On sable wings she hastens to renew;
 In vain the regions linger to forego
 Where soft compassion sooths the sense of woe.
 Constrain'd by adverse fortune's stern decrees
 With war to combat and the raging seas,
 From happier scenes revolving thought returns
 Where sighs the husband, and the parent mourns.

Again the moon resumes her midnight reign,
 Again extends her influence o'er the main.
 (How happy now the humble peasant's lot

*Love is now made to stand for a passion that ceases the moment it is gratified.—LANGHORNE.

Who sleeps secure within his peaceful cot,
 Where no tumultuous billows round him roar,
 Nor dangers urge when tempests beat the shore!)
 Wreck'd by the combat that so doubtful prov'd,
 Slow through the deep the victor's war-ship mov'd.
 Press'd by the waves that through her breaches glide,
 No more she rises with the rising tide:
 With ocean now her tallest masts she blends,
 And down the yielding element descends.*

The Fleet to windward, with sagacious care,
 To elude pursuit the foe retreating bear;
 Unable now those Northern towns to invade
 They under contribution meant to have laid.
 At length the Texel's stormy port we gain,
 Where Winter hastens to confirm his reign:
 Ere which we hope that liberty to find
 Which sheds a softening influence o'er the mind.
 In vain we hop'd!—when weeks and months are o'er,
 Still doom'd the captives of some hostile shore.
 Meantime, the prisoners which our holds contain
 (Where scenes of dire distress increasing reign)
 Despondent grow, and desperately try
 By force to gain what other means deny:
 Scenes that sad fancy sickens to relate,
 That still with *slaughter* mark our singular fate,
 Renew the horrors of each dreadful night,
 And awful rend the day's returning light;
 No life secure amidst the carnage drear
 Which guilt and innocence alike must fear.
 Nor safe from wreck the shattered vessels ride

*It has been asserted that a number of the wounded (who might have been timely removed) went down with her: but as the Author had not ascertained, when he wrote this review of the Action the certainty of such a catastrophe, he was unwilling to charge even the enemy of his country with an act of inhumanity of which he might not happen to be guilty.

Amidst the conflict of the winds and tide;
 While ships of war continue to blockade
 The path through which our exit must be made.

Whate'er the sequel of our fates may prove,
 Still guard, O HEAVEN, the tender Fair I love!
 May she with each returning day be blest,
 And every night afford her tranquil rest.
 Support her still that virtue to maintain
 For which life's pleasures were acquir'd in vain;
 So sure the scenes of misery and woe
 From Guilt's delusive invitations flow;
 So soon her votaries bewail the fate
 They grasp too early, and repent too late.
 Like fam'd PENELOPE, whom antient song
 Avers to have held her constancy so long,
 May ELOISA grace the modern page,
 And with her virtues soften Fortune's rage:
 Till like ULYSSES, Time at length shall land
 Again the writer on his native strand;
 Where mutual love no longer shall deplore
 The absent fated to return no more.

Now cease, my muse—forever cease the strain
 Resum'd with each returning morn in vain!
 Ye fabled nymphs invok'd so oft, so long,
 In varied numbers to awake the song
 That still in one sad plaintive tenor flow'd,
 As through my veins love's fatal passion glow'd,
 My breast no more with epic verse inspire,
 Nor tune to anguish the responding lyre!
 Farewell the Doric reed that o'er the plains
 Once rous'd the attention of the village-swains;
 Awoke the solitudes where Fancy stray'd
 To view the charms of the too-lovely maid,

When first the influence of those charms supply'd
 The impatient wish the tide of Fate deny'd;
 Where first I felt the torments of despair,
 And winds re-murmur'd the sad lover's care!
 Farewell the awful elegiac strain
 That still appears to die along the main!
 Her flight no more the Muse shall e'er renew;
 Forever, now, Pieria's mount adieu!—

Oh that the Bard as easily could forego
 The sad ideas of continuing woe:
 With equal ease, while adverse stars prevail,
 Forget the scenes that tragedize the tale;
 Or feel less forcibly the passion's rage
 Which no affliction e'er had power to assuage,
 Nor that enjoyment which so often cloys
 To abate the ardor infant-love supplies!
 But though no more revolves the painful verse
 That would in vain new miseries rehearse;
 Though (void of power to give the wish'd relief)
 No more resound the elegies of grief;
 The tuneful Nine though I henceforth resign,
 MY LOVE FOR ELOIS' SHALL NE'ER DECLINE.

ABELARD.

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